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Letter dated 15 September 2014 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to transmit the joint letter dated 29 August 2014 from Ernest Bai Koroma, President of the Republic of Sierra Leone, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, President of the Republic of Liberia, and Alpha Condé, President of the Republic of Guinea, which details the impact of the Ebola virus disease and puts in evidence the impact of the outbreak and highlights its implications for West Africa and beyond (see annex).

I should be grateful if you could bring the present letter and its annex to the attention of the members of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) BAN Ki-moon

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Annex

As you are no doubt aware, the sister republics of Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone are presently entrapped by the largest recorded outbreak of the dreaded Ebola virus disease, an epidemic that has placed enormous strain on our institutions, especially our health-care systems. This unprecedented outbreak occurred as we were enjoying relative peace, security and stability within the subregion and making collective efforts to enhance the socioeconomic development of our countries and peoples. At a time when we are still putting together the basic components of our health infrastructure, and already producing improved infant and maternal mortality outcomes, the epidemic has dealt a devastating blow to our efforts. The rates of infection and death among health-care workers, as well as the fears of those who would otherwise seek non-Ebola-related medical attention, have had a chilling effect on our health sectors, leaving some common diseases untreated. In the face of these challenges, we have taken decisive and substantive steps to contain the disease. We have in varying initiatives from our respective Governments restricted movements in parts of our countries, declared a state of emergency, suspended non-essential government-work, closed schools, stopped the operations of nightclubs, cinemas and video centres, and brought in the military to assist Government departments in fighting the disease.

The World Health Organization is now providing strategic support and coordination to help combat this disease. With your appointment of Mr. David Nabarro, as Senior Coordinator of the United Nations System Response to Ebola and across the spectrum, international response is being scaled up. With this comprehensive response augmenting our efforts, we are confident that we are now close to reversing the spread of the outbreak.

Yet, Mr. Secretary-General, we now face virtual economic sanctions and trade embargoes that will end up aggravating the effect of the outbreak on our economies and stifling our attempts to control the epidemic. Most of the airlines have suspended or cancelled flights to our countries. One of the remaining airlines, Brussels Airlines, is now under pressure to suspend flights to the region. They have been denied and refused technical stopover rights all along the West African coast, making it increasingly difficult for them to continue services to our capitals. Petroleum product suppliers received a notice forbidding ships berthing in Liberia, Guinea and Sierra Leone from docking at Pointe Noire. As the sanctions widen, it will become impossible to bring in the international expertise and supplies required to end the outbreak. Prices have already begun to rise and these sanctions will cause them to escalate even further at a time when domestic production has slowed dramatically. This could have disastrous economic consequences that transcend the subregion and could potentially return our countries to poverty levels that prevailed during earlier periods of conflict and instability. Some of the potential economic effects include cancellation of new investments or expansion of operations of large mines, drastic cuts in tourism, shortages of imported goods and cancellation of meetings in the subregion.

Ebola is spread through direct contact with the blood, secretions, organs or body fluids of infected living or dead persons. This is why it has been mostly family members of the infected and health workers who have contracted the virus. The World Health Organization, the International Civil Aviation Organization and the International Air Transport Association have been clear that such blanket travel bans

are not necessary and may actually prolong the fight against the disease. They may even counteract all the actions we have taken to encourage behavioural change, which is crucial to breaking the transmission chain.

Since the fall of the Berlin Wall, the world has inexorably marched towards deeper integration, reducing it to a global village. The world has collectively benefited from this integration as trade and commerce have spread to the extent that even the most underdeveloped countries find themselves in the value chains of the most developed. In the face of a challenge to that system, it appears that the rest of the world is leaving Liberia, Guinea and Sierra Leone ostracized, sanctioned and abandoned. It is not enough to send donations and supplies while our economies are left to die of slow strangulation. As impressive as our gains have been since the end of civil war, conflict and instability in our countries, those gains are fragile and reversible. It now appears that these sanctions are hastening a reversal. Everything we have collectively achieved in the Mano River Union over the last decade is now threatened.

We are therefore requesting the intervention of the United Nations with our neighbours far and near to end the sanctions. We appreciate the need for caution to prevent the disease from spreading beyond the current incidence countries and we are prepared to cooperate with our neighbours in instituting such measures. We request a United Nations resolution on a comprehensive response to the Ebola virus disease outbreak. The resolution would include:

1. Coordinated international response to end the outbreak.

   (a) The World Health Organization providing strategic guidance for overall response and the restoration of basic health service.

2. Coordinated international response to supporting the societies and economies of affected countries during the outbreak.

   (a) Maintaining trade links with reasonable precautions;

   (b) Maintaining transportation links with reasonable precautions.

3. International public education campaign.

By adopting such a resolution, we will be able to adequately respond to the crisis and minimize the effect on the economies of our affected countries.

It is our fervent hope that this matter will be given sympathetic consideration and treated with urgency.

(*Signed*) Ernest Bai **Koroma**
President of the Republic of Sierra Leone

(*Signed*) Ellen Johnson **Sirleaf**
President of the Republic of Liberia

(*Signed*) Alpha **Condé**
President of the Republic of Guinea